

All children are entitled to courteous and respectful treatment by students and staff at school. Educators have a duty to ensure that students have a safe learning environment. Fortunately, most educators take their responsibilities to stop bullying very seriously. Several states have passed anti-bullying laws and require public schools to have an anti-bullying program in place. Ask for a copy of your school's policy or check the student handbook to see if your school has policies that will help resolve the problem.

What Can You Expect Staff at Your Child's School to Do About Bullying?

- School staff should investigate the bullying immediately. After investigating your concerns, they should inform you as to what they plan to do about it.
- School staff should never have a joint meeting with your child and the child who bullied them. This could be very embarrassing and intimidating for your child. They should not refer the children to mediation. Bullying is a form of victimization, not a conflict. It should not be mediated.
- Staff should meet with your child to learn about the bullying that he or she has experienced. They should develop a plan to help keep your child safe, and they should be watchful for any future bullying. Educators should assure your child that they would work hard to see that the bullying stops.
- School personnel should meet with the children who are suspected of taking part in the bullying. They should make it clear to these children that bullying is against school rules and will not be tolerated. If appropriate, they should administer consequences (such as a loss of recess privileges) to the child who bullied and notify their parents.
- Educators and parents should be careful not to "blame the victim." Bullying is never the "fault" of the child who is bullied, and he or she shouldn't be made to feel responsible for being bullied. However, if your child is impulsive or lacks social skills, talk with a school counselor. It is possible that some students who are bullying your child are reacting out of annoyance. This doesn't make the bullying right, but it may help to explain why they are being bullied.
- Give the school reasonable time to investigate and hear both sides of the story. Sometimes, a child who bullies will make false allegations about a child as an additional way of bullying them. Educators should not jump to hasty conclusions and assign blame without a thorough assessment of the situation. This entire process should not take longer than a week.
- If bullying continues, write to the school's principal or administrator, and include evidence from your notes to back up your complaint. Putting a complaint in writing is important so there is a record of your concern.
- Most administrators and staff are responsive to bullying concerns. However, if your school administrator is unable or unwilling to stop the bullying, write to your school superintendent for assistance.
- Be persistent. You may need to keep speaking out about bullying that your child experiences.